

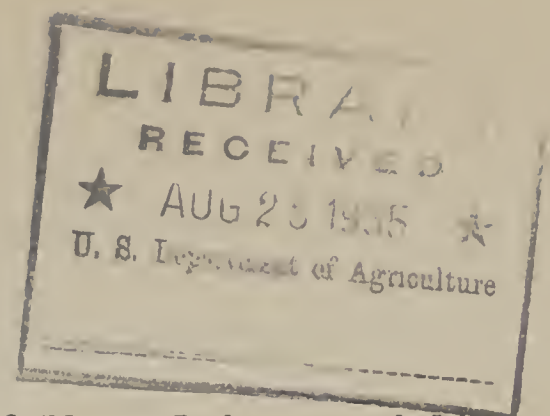
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THE GARDEN CALENDAR



A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC radio stations, Thursday, August 8, 1935.

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Hello, folks: Today I am going to give you a few gleanings from my mail basket, and answer two or three of the many questions that members of the farm and home hour family are asking. First I want to thank all of you who have written such nice and complimentary letters about our garden calendar and other programs. If we can please you with our broadcasts and give you the type of information you require, we feel well repaid for our effort.

First question today is about peonies. I have had a number of inquiries about cutting off the tops of the peonies during August. To one and all who have peonies in their gardens and flower borders I would say do not cut off the tops but keep the peonies cultivated, watered and growing until well along toward fall, or until they ripen naturally. If you cut off the tops at this time you'll weaken the roots for next spring's crop of flowers. Our next inquiry is "when should peonies be lifted, divided and reset." Under normal conditions peonies should be divided and reset about once in six or seven years. The work should be done late in the summer or early in the fall, or about the time that the leaves and stems turn yellow and begin to ripen. The old clumps should be lifted and divided and if they are very large clumps only the outside roots should be used for resetting. Select sections of the roots having about two or three good buds upon them for your new plantings. In case the roots show any blackening or decay take a sharp knife and cut out all of the decayed portion.

In preparing the ground for a new planting of peonies do not use manure but work in bone meal to the depth of 12 to 18 inches. First dig rather large holes then refill with good soil working the bone meal in the soil as you go. How much bone meal? Oh I should say at least a pint to each hole and as a rule a quart will be better, provided it is completely mixed with the soil. Pack the soil as it is returned to the holes so that it will not settle and when you plant your peony roots place them so that the buds will be exactly two inches below the finished surface. You can mound the soil over the roots during the winter but the mounds should be leveled in the spring before the buds start.

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I don't know just what/ is about the depth of planting that has such a bearing on the growth and blooming of peonies, but I do know that most of the failures in getting the plants to blossom are due to deep planting. Give your peony plants a generous handful of bone meal each spring before the buds start and that is about all the feeding they will require, but peonies do want plenty of moisture. At the same time the plants want good drainage and will not grow in a waterlogged soil.

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Questions about the summer pruning of roses, especially the bush roses, continue to flock to my mail basket. Yes, by all means keep the bush roses well pruned and well headed back so that the new growth will come from the main stems and also keep the plants well fertilized so that the new shoots will be strong and vigorous. It is all right to apply dairy barn manure to the rose beds at this time of the year, in fact there is not much danger of overdoing this kind of fertilizing of roses, especially the bush roses. I would not advise the use of nitrate of soda or any of the highly soluble nitrates as their use is pretty sure to result in winter-killing of the plants. Rose leaf-spot has been very prevalent lately and the plants should be sprayed with bordeaux mixture or thoroughly dusted with specially fine dusting sulphur to control the leaf-spot. Close pruning and also picking and burning the affected leaves will aid in the control of leaf-spot.

We will have time for about one more question from my mail basket, and here it is, "What causes tomatoes to shed their blossoms and fail to set fruit?" I wish I knew the real answer to that question myself, but I have a pretty good idea as to what causes the blossoms to shed. Only this morning I was talking with one of our men who is working with tomatoes and he tells me that all of the blossom clusters that were formed during the recent period of very hot weather have fallen off. High temperatures during the blooming period seem to be the answer, but under certain conditions excessive watering of the plants has been known to cause shedding of the blossoms.

My mail is bringing me a great many inquiries about the various diseases of tomatoes, tomato wilt, tomato leaf-spot and leaf-blight. In reply to these inquiries we are sending our Farmers' Bulletin No. 1338 on "Tomatoes as a Truck Crop," which contains information on the various diseases of the tomato and gives the best known remedies.

Well folks, I have not gotten very far toward the bottom of my mail basket today; in fact, I have not completely emptied that mail basket for weeks but your letters are always welcome, and when we see Farm and Home Hour written on your letters we always give them special attention.

So long, and if nothing happens I'll be with you on the good old Farm and Home Hour next Thursday.

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